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ABSTRACT

In one high school French department, videotaping began to be used as part of a final examination. It was found that the students wanted to see their tapes and began to critique their own and others' performances. The next year, taping was done earlier in the school year so that the tapes could be used as performance models. Students were more at ease before the camera and the presentations and conversations were more relaxed and natural. Taping is now used extensively in the curriculum, with each student being taped four to six times a year. The student is given part of the class time to prepare for the taping, and each student has an opportunity to critique his own and the general performance. In French I, the students begin by creating a conversation using a controlled vocabulary, and advance to more freedom in skit presentation and topic selection. French II students are taped early in the year for reference and are given more freedom in selecting topics. The teacher reviews the story, pronunciation, and grammar in the class before taping. French III students use selections from books that are read in class, fairy tales, the textbook, and their own ideas. At this level, the students are found to take great pride in their presentations, using costumes and careful planning. In some cases, the tapings are done in student homes. Many of the same techniques can be used with a cassette recorder. Teachers are urged to let students use their considerable creativity to benefit from this equipment in the classroom. (MSE)

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SO YOU WANT TO BE IN PICTURES: VIDEOTAPING IN THE FOREIGN LANGUAGE CLASSROOM

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One of the most creative and motivational tools for the modern foreign language teacher is the videotape camera and recorder along with the cassette recorder. This audiovisual equipment permits students both to hear and see their strengths and weaknesses. These devices reinforce student creativity that makes the language much more practical. The practice of videotaping provides a good method for students to see and critique themselves more objectively. Through the use of videotapes, good peer role models can be presented. These role models give the other students an incentive to improve their speaking ability in the language.

Four years ago the French Department at Hillsboro High School began using videotaping in the classroom. The first tapings were part of a final exam. After the students taped their respective presentations, they wanted to see themselves on TV. As each group watched their presentations, the teacher noticed that the students were critiquing their own and other group members' pronunciation, grammar, and diction. Although the tapes were of extremely good quality, this activity was being used as a final proficiency exam, and, therefore, the taped performances could not be presented to the classes as role models.

The following year, videotaping was introduced earlier in the term so that the taped performance models could be used as part of the teaching curriculum. At the beginning of the school term the classes were divided into groups of four students and assigned oral projects according to their level of training. For example, French I students used structured vocabulary, French II used structured topics, and French III used free form projects.

The teacher noticed that the students appeared to be more at ease before the camera than when called upon in class. The presentations were more relaxed and less rigid than direct presentations given before the class. The conversations presented were more natural than the textbook's rigid structure. Conversations did not appear to be forced but flowed smoothly. The stress level of the students was also lessened, first, because peers were not watching and, second, because students also had the opportunity to make corrections if they desired. The students seemed oblivious to the presence of the teacher who was watching and grading the productions. They were more interested in the camera and what they looked like on the big screen.

Today videotaping is a very important part of the curriculum. Taping is used extensively in the classroom. Each student is videotaped four to six times a year. Each grading period students are changed to different groups, permitting them to experience

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different accents and different ideas. The student is given part of the class time to prepare for the taping. For classes of twenty-six to thirty students, taping is completed within a two-day time span and usually takes only one forty-five minute class period. The French I student begins with a fifteen to thirty second taping. After taping, each group uses a critique form to do a self-analysis, as well as a critique of the group. The four areas evaluated on this form are clarity, performance, pronunciation, and creativity. The scoring scale is: excellent-4, good-3, average-2, and poor/needs improvement-1. If the group is dissatisfied with its presentation, a retaping can be scheduled followed by another critiquing. Most retapings occur immediately after the first presentation because the students are confident, and because the sooner the student is retaped, the more valuable is the reinforcement. Students want to improve upon their past performance. After all groups are finished taping and self-critiquing is completed, the tapes are shown to the entire class. Each class selects its own two best presentations using the critique form described above. The two best tapes are then shown to each French I class, and all the French I students select the best overall presentation, again using the critique form. The same procedure is used in French II with tapings that last thirty to sixty seconds, and in French III with a minimum taping time of forty-five seconds. After the best tape is selected from each level, an "Academy Award" is given to the winning group. This token award may be in the form of candy bars, extra credit points, badges, "Number One" buttons, or any other imaginative gift.

Taping in French I Class

The beginning tapes for the French I class are done with controlled vocabulary. This may be a list suggested by the textbook or a teacher-made list according to a certain category. One possibility for the first taping might consist of the ACTFL "McDonald's France" lesson packet (1). The students are introduced to the vocabulary needed for ordering, names of items in French, the cost of the items, conversion of francs to dollars, and cultural differences. Beginning students enjoy studying this lesson because they are able to identify the different items, and because they are able to attain a high level of comprehension. After completing the lessons, a prerequisite to the taping is that the group must write a conversation using some of the basic vocabulary from the unit. For example:

J'ai faim.	le quart
Bonjour	le hamburger
J'ai soif.	le chausson aux pommes
Bonsoir.	le café
Avez-vous...	le grand cornet
J'aimerais...	le cacao chaud
Je voudrais...	le Mac Shake
Pouvez-vous me changer?	le bière

J'ai commandé...	le poulet frit
Puis-je vous aider?	les frites
Merci.	le filet de poisson
Au revoir.	

The teacher reviews the basic vocabulary and assists in difficult areas of pronunciation and conversation clarity. Next each group acts out a visit to a restaurant for the taping. After taping, students review the tape and immediately critique the creation. Many times the teacher was encouraged because an individual in the group would take the role of helping others with pronunciation. Other students are receptive to such help, and they in turn join in by asking questions or by helping each other. Here they are sharing their ideas and knowledge of the language with each person in the group.

Students really use their vivid imaginations for these presentations. One group found two chairs with wheels and used them as cars. The same group brought in McDonald's realia and prepared a drive-thru window. Other students enjoyed watching this presentation with all its novelty. These students became role models encouraging other students to be more creative in their own presentations.

Other possibilities for beginning tapes come from the use of short dialog topics such as introducing party guests to each other, asking for a date, or filling out papers for credit card or job applicaions, passports, or immigration papers. In this question/answer series, one person poses questions to another. These questions deal with asking name, phone number, age, address, birthday, and other needed information. Students enjoy being able to present their newly acquired language skills to others. It is also a means of practicing vocabulary in a survival situation. One can see that making the lessons more practical and relevant in the early stages enhances the learning process for students.

As the year progresses, French I students receive more freedom in their skit presentations and topic selection. The presentations build upon each lesson, and students must utilize vocabulary from many lessons, thus providing a chance to review. Some later examples presented by students for videotaping are sports broadcasts, interviewing key sports figures played by members of the class, news stories using classmates as major news items; weather forecasts; and commercials for clothes, foods, drinks, and restaurants.

Students are able to use their creativity in writing, staging, and acting. As students' language ability develops, the teacher is able to distinguish between advanced students and students who are having difficulty understanding a concept or learning a skill. By using videotapes, more advanced students can do more challenging presentations, while students having difficulty

can receive the extra help they need to succeed. The extra time the teacher spends with them can be a source of encouragement for the struggling student as well as time for the teacher to help with pronunciation and grammar concepts. Students receive positive reinforcement and gain confidence in their speaking ability even though they are different levels of achievement.

French II Videotapes

French II and III students are taped early in the year as a pre-test for future reference and as a teacher assessment of language retention over the summer. From this pre-test, review material is compiled and review lessons presented. The French II class follows an approach similar to the French I class, but students are given more freedom in topic selection.

The French II videotapes are usually more complex because students have a year of videotaping experience behind them and because of their knowledge of the language. Some presentations are taken from stories read in class: "Le Monstre dans le Metro" (2), or "Le Chapeau Rouge" (3), or dialogs from the text. Students either adapt scenes from the story or present selections from the original text. Most students prefer to use the story's concepts, but they change the storyline and action. One French II group, for example, did an exceptional presentation using the concept of a monster invading the business area of a major city. An investigative reporter was frantically looking for people to interview for his column. One person interviewed was a disheveled housewife presented in stereotypical attire: hair in curlers, housecoat, house slippers, dizzy, and thinking only of cleaning her house before the monster destroyed the city. The second person interviewed was the Chief of Police following the television version of ineptness, crassness, and general lack of intelligence. The final interviewee was a Skid Row bum whose credibility was in doubt. This group used sound effects, lighting, and background drawings for the set. The presentation displayed ingenuity on the part of the students, as well as creativity, but it was also an interesting way for students to use the language. The tape received high praise from all classes and became a good model for other students. Positive comments were made by everyone concerning their excellent pronunciation and speaking abilities. The members of this group became instant celebrities in the French classes.

Students having difficulty with the language are encouraged to select and adapt lines from the original text. Correct grammar and form helps these students and writing the language correctly is good practice. Since the teacher has covered the story, pronunciation, and grammar with the class, preparing the presentation serves as a useful review and reinforces both pronunciation and grammar concepts. All students write scripts and the teacher or class aides help with translations, idiomatic expressions, corrections, and pronunciation.

Many times students use ideas from television serials, and the more action-packed the better. Some adaptations have been made from the "A-team" (4) and other detective or sitcom themes. Commercials supply extensive material for students because they are easy to adapt and arrange. It is possible to see in the class what is popular by the number of times a certain theme is presented. One year when a certain commercial was the craze, eight different adaptations were found in one class alone! After the taping, of course, comes the critiquing of the presentation. The same process is used as with French I.

French III videotapes

French III uses more sophisticated works to accomplish the same vocabulary expansion. Here students use selections from books that are read: Le Comte de Monte-Cristo (5), Les Trois Mousquetaires (6), fairy tales that are shown in elementary school, the text, and their own topics. Students are given more freedom to select, edit, and produce their own presentations. At this level students are energetic and enthusiastic about their productions. They take pride in their work and employ elaborate costumes and set designs. These costumes are brought from home, borrowed from other people, or taken from the art department's prop room. Everyone gets involved with the productions. French III students know what is needed for a first rate production and they put time and effort into accomplishing this. They scrutinize their first presentation and do an indepth critique of it. The students seem to experience little stress during the taping and are always anxious to see their productions even after three years of videotape experience. Students find success and receive positive reinforcement, not only from the teacher, but also from peers. They also have the self satisfaction of knowing that they did a good job. French I and French II classes always want to see the French III productions and French III students are eager to have them shown. New vocabualry is reviewed with French I and II classes before the tape is shown to introduce to the younger classes the new words and usage that they would not have seen in the text.

At this level the teacher can permit students to do videotaping at home if they desire and if they have the equipment. One group did an adaptation of a six o'clock news broadcast using the Third World countries as an anchor base. The setting was Baghdad, the anchormen dressed as sheiks, and the news centered around the oil cartel, revolutions, and assassinations in this area. They incorporated different video clippings from home videos and home movies for the main stories. Students were extremely proud of their ability to mix and organize a newscast. Use of home tapings permits students to have more time for production and critiquing and also permits students to incorporate a more polished look.

The classroom is the studio for this learning experience. While taping in French I and II classes, a corner of the room is

set aside as the studio. The television monitor, camera with a tripod, microphone, video tape recorder, extension cords, connectors and video recording tape are set in place. A blackboard, bookshelves, or filing cabinets may be used to divide the class from the taping area. This gives students who are taping more privacy and a sense that no one is watching them. Another successful method is to turn all desks in the opposite direction with students facing the opposite wall. It is understood by the other students that absolute silence must prevail during the taping and that no one can turn around to watch. The groups seated either work on their presentations or on an assignment. Numbers are drawn before taping, so students know whose turn is next and can be prepared. Since there is only one French III class and their presentations are more elaborate, the recording group is the only one in the room. This gives them more time to set up their props and arrange the setting as needed. Other students are in an empty classroom next door working on an assignment or presentation, or they are in the library doing research on cultural items. The librarian is cooperative and has the needed books on reserve for the class.

A supplementary and inexpensive alternative to the video camera and recorder is the cassette recorder. The same procedure used for videotaping can be applied to audio taping. Advantages of the cassette are its availability and its compactness. Students are divided into groups of two rather than four. They record conversations prepared in class or recite a dialog from the unit that has been introduced and reviewed. Students are able to hear weaknesses and are able to make corrections immediately. Students select numbers for their order of presentation and then move in succession from the seat to the door to the hallway where the recording is made. Students dissatisfied with the first recording have the option of retaping. This retaping may occur immediately or on the student's own time, either at home or during a study hall. The library has a soundproof booth that functions well for this type of work. Students are given a time limit (usually two days) for the tape to be presented to the teacher. When students are satisfied with the final taping, it is then submitted to the teacher for a grade.

Students often want to show their presentations at home and will bring in their own blank videotape to have a duplicate made from the original. This fosters good community relations between school and parents. Parents are able to see the progress students are making and their enthusiasm for the class, and they can see a small fragment of what the teacher is doing to prepare the student for survival in a foreign country. Students feel good about their accomplishments and this positive reinforcement encourages them to expand their abilities by pursuing further studies in the language. Students are unaware of all that is happening to them through the constant repetition of the work: writing, proofreading, revising the script, taping, critiquing, retaping,

critiquing, class debut, Academy Awards, and home viewing. Current concepts and vocabulary that students are using become ingrained in the subconscious. It is easier to recall correctly a grammar concept or vocabulary word when needed because of this practice.

The possibilities for use of the video camera in the classroom are limitless. The teacher must not be afraid to permit students to be creative, and the video camera is a means to accomplish this. The more that students strive to obtain goals, the more they will achieve. This method permits the student instant replay and positive reinforcement from teachers as well as peers. They are able to correct errors instantly or build upon strengths. Videotaping has many unexplored potentials as a teaching aid for the modern foreign language teacher. The only limitations are the ones the teacher or students impose upon their own creativity.

Notes

1 Robert Hendrick, Jr., Ronald McDonald dit, ACTFL Materials Center (2 Park Avenue, New York, NY), 1978.

2 Joseph Conroy, Le Monstre dans le Metro et d'Autres Merveilles, AMSCO School Publications (315 Hudson St., New York, NY 10013), 1978.

3 Le Chapeau Rouge: La Lettre Mysterieuse, Le Chien Disparu, La Grande Operation, La Valise Desirable, Gessler Publishing Co. (900 Broadway, New York, NY 10003).

4 A-team, NBC Television Serial.

5 Louise Seibert and Lester Crocker, Histoire d'une Revanche (adapted from Alexandre Dumas' Le Comte de Monte-Cristo), Charles Scribner's Sons, New York.

6 Henri Remachel, Au Service du Roi and Au Service de la Reine (adapted from Alexandre Dumas' Les Trois Mousquetaires), Gessler Publishing Company, Inc., 1964.

IDEA EXCHANGE: MACARONI PUZZLES
Karen Clark, Parma Senior High School, Parma, Ohio

Purchase alphabet macaroni and keep it in a big jar in the classroom. When there are a few extra minutes (after a test, for example), divide students into groups of three or four and give each group a big handful of macaroni. Groups compete to see which can make the most target language words from their macaroni letters.